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The American RECORD GUIDE



AUGUST, 1952 - VOL. 18, No. 12

Edited by

Peter Hugh Reed

Thirty Cents

*September
Releases*

BERLIOZ

WAL 304

"THE TROJANS AT CARTHAGE"

Complete Opera in 3 Acts

Soloists: Arda Mandikian, Jean Girardeau, Jeannine Collard, Xavier Depraz, Micheline Rolle, Andre Dran, Gerald Abdoun, Bernard Gallet.

Ensemble Vocal de Paris —

Direction André Jouve

Orchestre Société Des Concerts
du Conservatoire.

Conducted by Hermann Scherchen
3 — 12" with libretto . \$18.50

WL 5153

MOZART

Sonata in F Major K533 with Rondo K494

Adagio in B Minor K540

Fantasy and Fugue in C Major K394

Rondo in D Major K485

Badura-Skoda — Piano

Recorded at the Kunsthistorischen Museum
Vienna on a piano built by Anton Walter
around 1785.

WL 5154

MOZART

Sonata in F Major K533 with Rondo K494

Adagio in B Minor K540

Fantasy and Fugue in C Major K394

Rondo in D Major K485

Badura-Skoda — Piano

Same Program as WL 5153. Played on a
Modern Piano.

WL 5155

BRAHMS

Quintet in B Minor for Clarinet and
Strings Op. 115

Vienna Kammerhaus Quartet

Leopold Wlach — Clarinet

WL 5156

FAURE

Sonata in A Major for Violin and

Piano Op. 13

Sonata in E Major for Violin and

Piano Op. 108

Jean Fournier — Violin

Ginette Dayen — Piano

October Release

WAL 206

DONIZETTI

"Don Pasquale". A Comic Opera in 3 Acts
Soloists — Chorus, etc.

Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera

Conducted by Argeo Quadri

2 — 12" with libretto . . . \$12.50

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The American RECORD GUIDE



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The Union Speaks

Editorial Notes

▲James C. Petrillo has recently turned his attentions once again to the record field. This was bound to happen sooner or later with the large influx of foreign recordings. I had prepared quite a lengthy piece on this subject but John Briggs, in the July 27th Record Section of *The New York Times*, wrote an article on the subject which gives all the facts. I shall content myself with referring the interested reader to his article which, I am sure, will be found in most libraries.

The first concrete action by the American Federation of Musicians was published in the June issue of *Allegro*, the Official Journal of Local 802, published in New York. In an article entitled *AFL Body Backs Fight on Foreign Record Imports*, we read that the AFL Union Label Trades Department, at its silver jubilee convention in May at Rochester, N.Y., found the plight of the American musician in a critical state because of the merchandising of music by "unfair competition from foreign imports." In a Resolution adopted by the convention, it was stated that "the import of phonograph records, transcriptions and musical sound track recorded and manufactured outside of the United States at much lower labor costs and at sub-standard conditions, is constantly on the increase, and this import is flooding our country at comparatively low scale price." This has resulted in decreased production by American manufacturers and a reduction of employment opportunities for American musicians. In view of this, the AFL body summed up its

resolution against the import of foreign recordings in this manner: "BE IT RESOLVED, That this Convention go on record as urging the American Federation of Labor to take immediate steps to promote protective and remedial legislation to combat the inflow of foreign phonograph records, transcriptions and musical sound track, recorded and manufactured outside the United States (and Canada), taking into consideration (specific regulatory provisions to allow a certain limited importation of phonograph records of International cultural exchange value should be provided), and, therefore "BE IT RESOLVED, That this Convention instruct our delegate attending the next convention of the New York State Federation of Labor to introduce this resolution as the opinion of this convention."

There is no question that a great deal of piracy has taken place in the record field and considerable advantage taken of the gullible public since LP became the featured record. It is the former that the AFL is endeavoring to fight.

Mr. Petrillo recently forebade any musician who is a member of the AFM to make records in Europe with foreign musicians. Artur Rodzinski, who recently signed a contract to make recordings in Europe for Remington, declined to be influenced by this edict and promptly resigned from AFM so that he could fulfill his contract. The first performances, made by the conductor and what would seem to be a pickup orchestra in Vienna, have already arrived in this country.

At this time, it is not possible to consider the quality and character of the cheap recordings, but it should be noted that many that are sold for \$5.95 these days are not worth their price in comparison to the products put out by our leading American concerns. The cheap discs are by no means the economical blessings most would have us believe. These LP's have one third of the life-time of a first-rate English or American record. Moreover, the material of which the cheaper record is made wears a needle, even a diamond, very badly. In every field, there is a cheaper product to tempt the person of small means to believe that its purchase permits him to acquire two or three times as much as a first-rate product for the sum of the latter. But, as in every other field, the buyer generally gets exactly what he pays for.

It seems a pity that the record field has to come under a regimentation because of the malicious practise of a handful of avaricious and greedy men, who are not above bamboozling the public. Beyond a doubt, as has been often said, the American consumer learns the hard way if he ever actually learns.

* * *

The summer being a time for hard-earned vacations, your editor was hard put to get the August issue assembled as he had to double up on his work. Also, the last four days of July were taken up with the Music Industry Trade Show and Convention, held in New York, where your editor was able to renew friendships

and make others with many out-of-town folks.

This fact would not interest readers, but one phase of the show deserves mention. The greater majority of visitors was interested in the Fair Trades Law and the reaction of all manufacturers toward it. If one could claim there was a theme song at the MIT Show, this was it. In the record industry exhibits, this was discussed pro and con by all visitors, and your editor got the impression that this hard-hit industry—where cut-rate prices in supermarket shops or mail order houses have done so much to old and reliable dealers throughout the country—was definitely interested in the new law. At this time, we have been informed, the legal departments of the big concerns are examining the law and its feasibility.

Szigeti at his Greatest

PROKOFIEFF: *Concerto No. 1 in D, Op. 19*; **MOZART:** *Concerto in D, K. 218*; **Joseph Szigeti** (violin) with the **London Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Sir Thomas Beecham**. Columbia LP ML-4533, \$5.45.

▲THESE performances remain unexcelled and certainly deserved Columbia's fine engineering to make them successful LP offerings. There is a rapport between violinist and conductor in both that remains unapproached elsewhere. Moreover, these are examples of Szigeti's artis-

(Continued on page 387)

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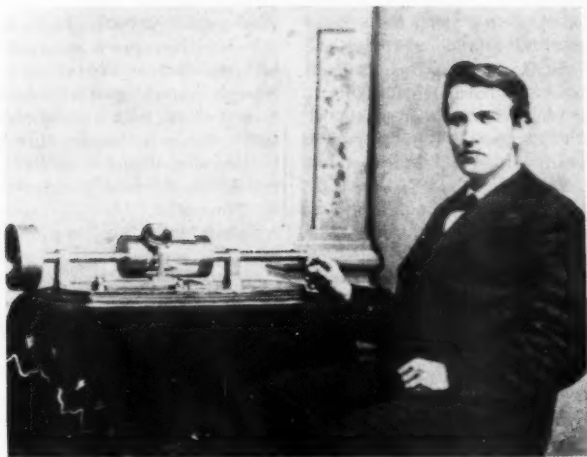
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Thomas A. Edison in 1877

The Phonograph 75 Years Ago

by Ulysses "Jim" Walsh

THIS MONTH marks the 75th Anniversary of the invention of the phonograph!

In August, 1877, Thomas Alva Edison handed a rough sketch to one of his workmen, John Kruesi, and told him to build the device he had outlined. The price of the job was to be somewhere from \$18 to \$30. Kruesi constructed the apparatus, which consisted largely of a grooved cylinder around which tinfoil would be wrapped, a crank, a funnel-like speaking tube and a sharp metal point which both indented and reproduced sound waves.

On August 15, 1877, the 30-year-old inventor put tinfoil on the cylinder, turned the crank and, in the presence of his skeptical German handy man, recited *Mary Had a Little Lamb* into the funnel. He replaced the needle at the starting point, the machine repeated the story of Mary and her lamb in tones which critics were later to compare unfavorably with those of a ventriloquist's dummy or a

parrot with a head cold, and Kruesi exclaimed "Gott in Himmel!" The phonograph had given its first performance and Thomas A. Edison was soon hailed as a "Wizard."

Today, Edison's right to be called the inventor of the first "talking machine" is generally conceded. Incidentally, the term "talking machine" was coined by a newspaper writer after one of Edison's associates, Edward Richardson, had given a lecture in Buffalo, in which he evoked cheers by telling of the miraculous new contrivance. The next morning a headline said: "A GREAT DISCOVERY! A TALKING MACHINE BY PROFESSOR EDISON. MR. EDISON'S WONDERFUL INSTRUMENT WILL PRODUCE ARTICULATE SPEECH WITH ALL THE PERFECTIONS OF THE HUMAN VOICE."

Occasionally a claim is made for Charles Cros, a Frenchman who, in April, 1877, wrote, but did not make public, a paper

outlining methods by which he believed sound could be reproduced from the Phonograph, an apparatus invented in 1857 by another Frenchman, Leon Scott, for tracing sound vibrations on a cylinder coated with lampblack. But Cros never made a working model and, as Edison did not learn of the Frenchman's theorizing until after his own phonograph was constructed and reproducing, it is hard to see how a just claim can be presented for Cros as the phonograph's inventor.

Inaccurate Traditions

If the generally accepted historical account of the phonograph's invention is accurate, some of the related traditions are not. The assertion has been frequently made, mostly by "superior persons" — who like to decry Mr. Edison as essentially an uncouth mechanic with a middle class outlook — that for many years after he produced the phonograph its inventor had no conception of the vast cultural and musical possibilities of his squeaky voiced offspring. The story goes that he regarded it merely as an amusing toy that might also be developed into a mechanical secretary to simplify dictation problems for the harassed business man.

Such statements are not true. Within ten months after he produced that first tinfoil recording and reproducing instrument, Edison published a long article in the June, 1878, *North American Review*, predicting many future uses for the phonograph. Among them were: Letter writing and dictation of all kinds without a stenographer; "phonograph books" for the blind; teaching elocution and foreign languages; reproducing music; and a telephone attachment, to make permanent records of conversations. Each of these predictions has come true.

The *Review* contribution is fairly well known to research workers. But another article, virtually unknown now, but startling in the clear-sighted manner in which it predicts present-day achievements (such as long playing records containing an entire symphony), appeared in the *New York World*, apparently several months before Edison's personal article was printed. Some of the tech-

nical means by which "Professor Edison," as he was then known, proposed to achieve his reproductive marvels are laughable when compared to the achievements of our time, but we, with our complacent hindsight, should not smile other than sympathetically at any apparently ludicrous details in Edison's interview with the *World* reporter.

Before preceding to the interview, attention is directed to a not generally understood fact — that Edison invented the disc record as well as the cylinder. The distinction of producing the first disc is usually credited to German-born Emile Berliner, and it is true that Berliner made the first commercially practicable instrument playing lateral-cut discs. Edison's earliest discs, like his cylinders, were hill-and-dale. Berliner's admirers have maintained he chose the lateral cut because it produced better music but the truth is that he elected to use it not because it gave results superior, or even equal to, the vertical method but in order to avoid a controversy with Edison over patent rights. Edison's first patents, issued in January, 1878, covered both disc and cylinder recording.

"Absolutely Perfect" Recordings

Even before those patents were granted, Edison was recording on discs. In December, 1877, some four months after the phonograph recited its first "piece," a Philadelphia man, Frank Foell, wrote to Edison, making a recording suggestion, and received this reply in a letter which Foell's son still has:

"Dear Sir: Your letter and sketch received. Am much obliged for the suggestion and it would be valuable, but owing to the inconvenience of placing the paper on the cylinder I had to adopt a revolving plate with a volute spiral and have one now working satisfactorily. The reproduction of the voice is now absolutely perfect." (Such a claim for recording with as the Buffalo paper said — "all the perfections of the human voice" has been made with undeviating regularity ever since 1877, whenever a new stage in the development of the phonograph has been achieved.)

Edison soon afterwards returned to the cylinder, holding it to be theoretically perfect for sound recording, because the grooves remain the same length and size all the way across, whereas those on discs become smaller and lose tone quality after the half-way point. That is the reason RCA Victor has advertised so strenuously that its "45's" are not recorded up to the "distortion point." But he was still using the disc when the *World* man called at his laboratory, probably at about the same time he was writing to Foell. My own copy of the interview is taken from the September, 1905, issue of the now defunct *Talking Machine News*, of London, and the exact date of original publication is not given.

"The reporter," *World* readers were told, "followed Mr. Edison into the workroom, where about a dozen lathes and machines were in full operation. On one of the tables was the model. The improvement in the phonograph consists of a circular plate being substituted for the cylinder, and clockwork for the crank." Edison was quoted as saying the clockwork motor was an important improvement because it ensured complete regularity and accuracy and could be simultaneously thrown in and out of gear. He then remarked: "We're going to start a publication office in New York when the phonograph is ready."

Edison's 1877 "Publication" Plans

Asked, "What do you intend to publish?" Edison listed "music, novels and general literature." "Take music to begin with," he said. "We will phonograph orchestral concerts by brass and string bands, instrumental and vocal solos and part-songs. The sheets bearing the sound impressions of this music will be removed from the phonograph and multiplied to any extent by electrotyping, and persons can make selections of any composition they desire. Then this music may be reproduced by any phonograph, with all the original sweetness and expression; and not only that but the pitch can be raised or lowered by increasing or diminishing the speed of the phonograph." He estimated the cost of such a tinfoil

sheet of recorded music as "about 25 cents."

The reporter was puzzled as to how some of the contemplated miracles were to be managed. "How," he asked, "can you take an orchestra, when it is necessary in talking to the phonograph to apply your mouth close to the diaphragm?"

"Professor Edison" had an answer, even though it didn't exactly anticipate microphonic recording. He said that the phonograph would be attached to a hole in one end of a barrel, and a "funnel like those used in ventilating steamships" would project from the other end. "This will receive the music from the entire orchestra, but of course not reproduce it with so great a volume. Piano music will be phonographed by a hood being placed over the instrument, and the volume of the reproduction will be one-fourth that of the piano."

When the interviewer asked "What method will be pursued with literary matter?" Edison tapped "the circular plate," which the reporter estimated to be about six inches in diameter.

Symphony Recordings Predicted

"We calculate," said the inventor, "that an ordinary 50-cent novel can be got on this. Novels and valuable literature will be read to the phonograph. . . and the matter will be multiplied by electrotyping in the same manner as music. (This, of course, was essentially a prediction of master records.) You see, therefore, that you can have a phonograph in your parlor with an album of selected phonographic matter lying beside it. You can take a sheet from the album, place it on the phonograph, start the clockwork and have a symphony performed. Then by changing the sheet you can listen to a chapter or two from a favorite novel, and this may be followed by a song, a duet or a quartet. At the close the young people may indulge in a waltz, in which all may join, for no one need be asked to play the dance music."

Then follows a startling statement from "The Professor" about the interest sightless persons were already taking in his

apparatus. "You can easily see," he said, "what an advantage the phonograph will be to the blind; and indeed I have already received one hundred orders from such persons."

Perhaps the most surprising phase of the interview came when the *World* man asked Edison what a perfected phonograph would cost, and he replied: "About one dollar." Present-day enthusiasts, who pay many hundreds of dollars for the alleged ultimate in higher fidelity reproducing equipment will find themselves wishing the inventor's prophecies had been as accurate in financial detail as they were far-sighted in outline.

Public Demonstrations

Of course the tinfoil phonograph never produced those miracles so sanguinely predicted. Public demonstrations were given in New York and other large cities by such well known artists as Emily Winant, soprano, and Jules Levy, cornet virtuoso. They played or sang into the "funnel" and the tinfoil repeated a travesty of their natural tones, usually to the unconcealed amusement of the listeners. In April, 1878, Edison took the contraption to Washington and gave a White House performance for President Rutherford B. Hayes. But there were insuperable difficulties in the way of accomplishing anything worth while using so perishable a material as tinfoil for the recording and reproducing medium. Edison became absorbed in electric lighting experiments and for several years did nothing to improve his raucous-voiced toy.

A stride toward development of the phonograph to its latter-day standing as the preserver of great interpretations of fine music came in the mid-1880's, when two Washington experimenters — Charles Sumner Tainter and Chicester Bell — produced a machine using wax cylinders instead of tinfoil. They also had the help of Bell's brother, Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone. About the same time, Berliner, also living in Washington, produced his first horribly scratchy zinc discs. After a year or so the infant cylinder phonograph and record business was parceled out among territorial com-

panies, holding licenses from a parent organization, the North American Phonograph Company, in which Edison was interested. Tainter and Bell's "Volta Laboratory Association" gave way to the Columbia Phonograph Company, so called because it was licensed to do business in the District of Columbia. Another pioneer was the United States Record Company of Newark, which made "New Jersey" cylinders. There were many other State concerns, most of them short-lived, as was North American itself.

First "Musical Phonograms"

Edison returned to his phonograph interests in the late '80's, doing recording for North American but not for several years issuing cylinders under the Edison name. The Edison-recorded cylinders offered by North American were known as "phonograms." North American's first catalog of "musical phonograms," issued in 1890, consists of only four pages, just two of which are devoted to record listings. One page contains this pompous announcement:

"The following list of musical phonograms we propose to keep in stock. This list will be added to from time to time as we ascertain from the demand those most likely to become popular. We have also in stock a large number of phonograms not on this list, and parties can be furnished with almost any of the 'records' that have been sent out heretofore." (Printing "records" in quotes seems to indicate that this now standard expression was then considered an essentially vulgar term, used only under protest!)

That first batch of "phonograms" was not distinguished for variety. It concentrated on instrumental offerings with only two vocal numbers — quartet renditions of "Negro Melodies" and "Popular Songs." There were sixteen "brass band" selections; fifteen by "parlor orchestra"; sixteen cornet solos (Mr. Levy?); eight clarinet numbers; ten flute solos (probably played by Eugene C. Rose, still living in Freeport, New York, at the age of 86, who recalls that he made experimental Edison cylinders in 1889); ten piccolo offerings (probably also by Rose); ten violin

renditions; and — a surprise — six "piano duets." A second list showed that many of these "phonograms" were discontinued in August, 1890, probably because, there being no master records, the supply was exhausted.

It would be fascinating to trace in detail the marvelous development of the phonograph from its crude beginning to the present day, but space forbids. In the '80's and '90's demonstrators displayed the wax-cylinder machines in schools, churches and concert halls throughout this country. Other demonstrators gave similar exhibitions abroad, and many famous personages were delighted to speak a few words into the phonograph for the benefit of a presumably grateful posterity.

The Phonograph Through the Years

Moulded cylinders made from permanent masters appeared in 1901, the year that the Victor Talking Machine Company and its discs, which eventually supplanted the cylinder, first became known. Columbia, originally a cylinder manufacturer, began issuing discs in 1902. Ten-inch discs first appeared in 1901 and twelve-inch in 1903. Cylinders played only two minutes until Edison introduced his four-minute Amberol record in 1908. The Amberols, with their tightly packed grooves, did not wear well. Faced by declining business, Edison brought out his unbreakable, virtually wear-proof Blue Amberol cylinders in 1912, after several other examples of this type of cylinder were already on the market both here and abroad. In 1912, too, the inventor produced his first Diamond Disc phonographs and records which, despite some defects, such as noisy surfaces during most of the World War years, are now widely regarded as the masterpieces of the acoustic recording era. Like the Blue Amberols, the Diamond Discs did not wear out when played on their own properly adjusted machines. Edison's business became predominantly disc but he continued to make cylinders for "the country trade" until his company went out of the phonograph and record business in the fall of 1929.

In 1929, when recorded music faced the
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same sort of devastating competition from radio as the latter is now receiving from television, electrical recording was introduced and with new, specially designed reproducing instruments, which gave the phonograph revived popularity for several years. Edison was reluctant to take up electric recording, considering the tone coarse and unnatural as, despite its gain in range and volume, it at first was, but in 1926 he introduced his vertical-cut long-playing records dubbed from ordinary Edison discs. The ten-inch ones played twelve minutes to a side, and the twelve-inch, twenty minutes, but they could not be reproduced electrically and their lack of volume, compared to the superabundant sounds produced by the Orthophonic Victrola, Viva-Tonal Columbia, and Brunswick Panatrope, kept them from winning much acceptance.

Long-Players and "45's"

Victor's introduction of lateral-cut long-players in 1931, at the height, or the depth, of the depression, also was unsuccessful. Record sales in 1932 reached the lowest point since the early 1900's, but after that year there was a gradual gain, thanks to a variety of factors, among them installation of many thousands of that ever-present nuisance, the "juke-box," cheaper popular records and an increasing desire for more selective musical programs than those provided by radio. During the past decade more records have been sold than at any other time in the phonograph's seventy-five year history.

Columbia's revival of long-playing records in 1948 was a sensational success, and RCA Victor had equally good fortune with the seven-inch "45's" the following year. Today the public has its choice of recordings in three speeds — 33, 45 and 78 revolutions a minute — and the variety is so great that the prospect of such a feast of good things would have seemed incredible if anybody had prophesied it when Edison turned the crank of that first tinfoil phonograph back in August, 1877.

Only 25 years more and sound recording and reproduction will reach the century mark. What will the phonograph be like then? Will disc records still predom-

inate or will they have given way to tape or some other medium? It's an intriguing subject on which to speculate. Maybe some of us will still be around in 1977 to check up on the latest and, no doubt, greatest developments in recorded music!

SOME H. M. V. LPs

▲ Though we had hoped to review all of the first HMV releases of RCA Victor this month, this was not possible as production difficulties prevented the company from getting the discs to us before the end of July. The following were the only records we were able to cover, at the last minute. (Editor)

SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 7*; **RUBBRA:** *Symphony No. 5*; **Halle Orchestra** conducted by **Sir John Barbirolli**. RCA Victor LHMV LP-1011, \$5.95.

▲ **BARBIROLLI'S** performance of the Sibelius is beautifully poised, carefully detailed and deftly controlled. He is said to have an affection for Sibelius' symphonies, which is assuredly substantiated here. Though there is not the fervor or depth of feeling of the old Koussevitzky version, I believe the Barbirolli performance deserves the greatest respect and I feel it will appeal to many listeners because of its fine recording, which is live and clear in sound. Moreover, the disc includes a performance of a symphony by an exceptionally gifted English composer.

Rubbra follows in the polyphonic traditions of Vaughan Williams and Elgar. Without extensive knowledge of his output, I would say his individuality is fully developed. While the form of this work may be disconcerting to some, it is not difficult to grasp. The composer, in the February 1949 issue of *The Music Review*, tells us that "formally the work is in the nature of a triptych, the three 'panels' of which are as follows: *Adagio—Allegro energico; Allegro moderato; Grave—Allegro riro*. From this it will be seen that the first movement, with its long *Adagio* introduction, exactly balances the final

two movements (played without a real break), the middle movement (a scherzo) affording the necessary bright relief. The formal balance is reflected, too, in the return, at the end of the work, of the motivating phrase played in the first few bars by a solo oboe."

Rubbra is a serious composer who panders in no way to popular tastes for obviously pleasing melodies. There is consistent beauty in his thematic material and also breadth of phrase. By way of urging a listener's appreciation, I wish to quote a thought-provoking remark by Edward Sackville-West (May issue of *The Gramophone*): "What discophiles need is not music that makes a startling first impression, quickly to show itself as weak and superficial, but music that grows upon one—as, for instance, Rubbra's *Fifth Symphony* has grown upon me. . ." Barbirolli gives a splendid performance of this work and the recording is excellent.

—P.H.R.

PAGANINI: *Violin Concerto No. 2*; **VIEUXTEMPS:** *Violin Concerto No. 4*; **Yehudi Menuhin** (violin), the **Philharmonia Orchestra** conducted by **Walter Susskind**. RCA Victor LP WHMV-1015, \$5.95.

▲ **PAGANINI'S** meteoric virtuosity may have been a contemplated means within itself, yet he knew how to write a piece that captured the public's heart and interest. His finale here, the famous *Campanella*, is a case in point. There is a lot of theatre in this concerto which set it apart from the works of his contemporaries and probably afforded a welcome respite to listeners saturated with the works of Spohr and other sober-minded gentlemen. Menuhin is in top form in this opus, playing with a tonal sheen and a technical assurance that frequently astounds. The realistic recording has a forward focus on Menuhin's violin, resulting in a stridency of quality, which could not have existed in the concert hall.

The romantic sentiment of Vieuxtemps seems tame after Paganini although this composition was also written with virtuosic effects in mind. Vieuxtemps wrote

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far better for the orchestra, raising it above the level of a mere accompaniment. He belonged to the era of Meyerbeer and his music has a similar aura. Menuhin plays this concerto with persuasive artistry and considerable beauty of tone. The LP recording is much better than the original 78 rpm release by HMV, which was damned by English critics for the prominence and shrillness of the violinist's tone, and it is richer in sound. —P.H.R.

HOLST: *The Planets-Suite, Op. 32;* **BBC Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Sir Adrian Boult.** RCA Victor LP LHMV-1002, \$5.95.

▲TIME WAS when Holst's astrological suite was somewhat of a sensation in the concert hall. I can remember back in the early 'twenties when my friend Albert Coates introduced the music here for the first time. There were a lot more people interested in astrology then, and Holst's musical treatise on the meaning of the planets was much discussed by such people, as well as others. There was even an acoustic recording, which more than one musician listened to at my home. Descriptive music like this may not wear well, but Holst was mighty ingenious and wrote gloriously and glowingly for the orchestra, though the Planets were given a definite British complexion in the writing.

I agree with Alec Robertson, who said in *The Gramophone* when this recording was issued in England in July 1945, "the work remains fascinating in the extreme, fascinating as a box of magical delights." The original 78 rpm recording was regarded in 1945 as the last word in orchestral reproduction. Said Mr. Robertson "it is more actual than anything we have had before and should almost cause heart failure from excitement, even in the hardened gramophile." Since then, we have had many advancements in recording technique, led by London's famous *ffrr* development. This LP transfer is good but potential heart failure no longer exists. It is not sensational in comparison to more recent issues, some of which can be really sensational on extended range equipment. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Idomeneo—Highlights;* **Sena Jurinac** (soprano), **Dorothy MacNeil** (soprano), **Richard Lewis** (tenor), **Alexander Young** (tenor), the **Glyndebourne Festival Orchestra** conducted by **Fritz Busch.** RCA Victor LP LHMV-1021, \$5.95.

▲THOSE who are familiar with the Haydn Society set of the complete performance of *Idomeneo* know this opera's mastery in vocal and orchestral writing. To them, this disc will be a must, if for no other reason than for the vocal beauty and rare artistry of Sena Jurinac as Ilia. Moreover the orchestral conducting of the late Fritz Busch, which includes his splendid performance of the overture, is an added incentive. To others, I question the value of this release. Skipping about in a Mozart score from aria to aria, or recitative to recitative, makes for clashing of keys and leaves one up in the air as to just where in the operatic proceedings one may be. The notes do not quite suffice though they give you a lead. Unlike the Haydn set, the Glyndebourne performance of this opera (would we could have had it complete) does not cast a woman in the part of Idamante but gives the part to a male singer, thus preserving the illusion of a manly "warrior-prince." The selections here are overture, Ilia's recitative and aria at the beginning of Act I, Idomeneo's aria *Vedrommi intorno* near the end of Act I, Choral Scenes from Act II, Ilia's aria *Zeffirelli lusinghieri* from Act III, Scene I, Quartet at the end of Scene I, Chorus and Aria of the High Priest opening of Scene 2, Chorus and Aria of Idomeneo at the opening of Scene 3. The recording, a tape job I am told, is wonderfully realistic and well balanced. —J.N.

MOZART: *Concerto in D minor, K. 466;* *Concerto in C minor, K. 491;* **Artur Schnabel** (piano) with the **Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Walter Susskind.** RCA Victor LHMV-1012, \$5.95.

MOZART: *Concerto in C major, K. 503;* **Edwin Fischer** (piano) with the **Philharmonia Orchestra** conducted by **Josef Krips;** **BACH:** *Concerto in C for Three Claviers;* **Edwin Fischer, Denis**

Matthews, Roland Smith (pianos) with **Orchestra** conducted by **Edwin Fischer**. RCA Victor LHMV-1004, \$5.95.

▲THE RECORDING in the Schnabel disc is realistic, sonorous and rich-toned — probably a tape job. The recording in the Fischer disc emanates from 78 rpm discs and does not have quite the same liveness and fullness.

The death of Schnabel last year makes his record of special value, and there is no doubt that many will want it as a souvenir of the artist's playing of Mozart. His performance of the *D minor Concerto* is especially gratifying to me as both he and Susskind substantiate the classical characteristics of this much disputed opus. There is little evidence of the noted pianist's didactic style, which was found in his pre-war performances. His playing in both concertos has rich breadth and sensitivity, though it is not always free of hard-edged tone, a characteristic of his style, which aimed for grandeur and virility. One can criticize Schnabel for certain shortcomings — his trill was never completely satisfying and some of his octave-playing tends to rigidity. But his comprehension of the music of both works, his sense of uniformity, balance, and timing are the earmarks of an accomplished musician. These qualities lift his performance of the grand *C minor Concerto* far above those of Fischer in the pre-war issue (Victor 482). While I admire young Badura-Skoda's performance of this same work for its understanding of the classical style, and again, its balance and timing, I concede that Schnabel has a richness of breadth that is more rewarding. That does not imply a replacement of the latter record. Both pianists give performances that are preferable to the somewhat erratic one of Lili Kraus, and the far from inspired rendition of Biro. This is definitely a disc with which to live and to remember its performer, despite the fact that the cadenzas used in the *C minor* are alien to Mozart.

Fischer's performance of the *C major Concerto* has far less of the quality heard in Schnabel's. Apparently he and the con-

(Continued on page 388)

New Recorded Operas of Moussorsky - Verdi - Gluck

MOUSSORGSKY: *Boris Godunov* (opera in 4 Acts) (sung in Russian) — **Pirogoff** (Boris), **Slatogorova** (Feodor), **Kruglikova** (Xenia), **Chanayev** (Shouisky), **Michailov** (Pimen), **Nyelepp** (Gregory), **Maksekova** (Marina), **Yakuschenko** (Varlaam), **Turtschina** (Innkeeper's wife), **Kossloski** (A Simpleton), etc., **Chorus and Orchestra** of the **Bolshoi Theatre**, Moscow, conducted by **N. S. Golovanov**. Period LP set 554, 3 discs, \$17.85.

VERDI: *Rigoletto* (Opera in 3 Acts) (sung in German); **Helge Roswaenge** (Duke), **Heinrich Schlusnus** (Rigoletto), **Erna Berger** (Gilda), **Georg Hann** (Sparafucile), **Margarete Klose** (Maddalena), and others, **Chorus and Orchestra** of the **Berlin State Opera** conducted by **Robert Heger**. Urania LP set, 2 discs, \$11.90.

GLUCK: *Alceste* (opera in 3 Acts) (sung in French) — **Ethel Semser** (Alceste), **Enzo Sari** (Admete), **Bernard Demigny** (High Priest and Apollo), **Jean Mollien** (Evander), **Jean Hoffman** (Hercules, Herald and 4th Chorus Soloist), **Janine Lindenfelder** (1st Chorus Soloist), **Simone Codinas** (2nd Chorus Soloist), **Jacques Coquier** (3rd Chorus Soloist), **Lucien Mans** (The Oracle and Thanatos), **Paris Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus** conducted by **Rene Leibowitz**. Oceanic LP set 30A, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲THE *Boris* recording, made in the USSR, whether from tape or 78 rpm, suggests that Western influences in engineering technique have penetrated behind the Iron Curtain. Though there is little of the acoustic resonance associated with a theatre, there is plenty of power. It is realistic in dramatic qualities with stage positions of participants often effectively

conveyed, especially in regard to the chorus which sometimes sings behind the scenes.

This is probably as fine a performance of Moussorgsky's stage masterpiece as we will get for a long time. Heard in its native Russian, this opera gains in more ways than one because the elemental power of its inspiration (basically the voices of the people) and the vigor of its dramatic expressiveness — its frequent rudeness and barbaric force — are more naturally exploited. Somehow, the Italian language polishes the characteristic strength and vigorous poignancy of the music, for example, in the wild choruses of the Revolutionists in the final act. This performance uses Rimsky-Korsakoff's scoring, which does tame down some of the elemental power of Moussorgsky's original version. Some enterprising record concern might try to get a recording of the first version.

The performance is not complete, though more of the score is heard here than in our opera houses. The scene between Marina and Rangoni is omitted, but the scene in Act 3 before the Cathedral of St Basil is restored. This introduces the children taunting the simpleton, whom Boris takes for a holy man. The Revolutionary Scene in the forest of Krony, usually presented at the beginning of the last act is restored to its original position after Boris' death scene, thus ending the opera with the Simpleton weeping for the fate of the Russian people.

Great Interpreters

The three greatest exponents of the role of Boris, whom I have heard, were Chaliapin, Vanni-Marcoux and Adamo Didur. Neither Kipnis nor Pinza were as compelling in their characterizations or singing. Pirogoff (the first names of singers are not given in Russia) proves an impressive Boris. Vocally, he is more powerful than Kipnis or Pinza, but lacking in the latter's stylistic refinements.

His is a vivid and dramatically impelling impersonation of the remorseless Boris, suggesting a forceful singing actor. Most of these Russian singers are throaty in quality. This is true of Pirogoff, who is

also sometimes tonally unsteady. Turt-schina, who sings the Innkeeper's wife, actually owns a vocal wobble. On the other hand, Nyelepp, as the False Dimitri, has a first-rate tenor voice, and Michailov, as Pimen, has a smooth and expressive bass. Most of the singers are excellent musicians and the chorus is well trained. Gofvanoff is a knowing conductor with a full understanding of the orchestra's part in the drama's unfoldment.

Verdi in German

While I was friendly disposed toward *Macbeth* in German (I was unfamiliar with that score in its original Italian), I am not similarly disposed toward *Rigoletto*. The language does not adjust itself properly to Verdi's music. Roswaenge, a manly Duke, enunciates clearly but produces sounds that are frequently ugly in comparison with the original sounds that Italian singers produce. Some may prefer a more dramatic voice in the role of the Jester, but Schlusnus' lyric singing is appreciable for its poise and *legato*. His use of his voice recalls the art of Battistini, and I suspect both men sang this role in a similar manner. Schlusnus does not quite convey the full pathos and malevolence of the character, but his artistic intelligence is always evidenced. If reason for this release is questioned, the fact that it offers the artistry of Schlusnus in a famous operatic role is the answer. The recent death of the noted baritone makes this set a valued source for acknowledgement of his artistic eminence. Miss Berger proves far less sympathetic in the German language as Gilda than she did in the Italian of the Victor set. What the German language does to the musical lines of Verdi could be dwelt upon at great length.

This performance is probably as fine as any heard in recent times at the Berlin State Opera. It must date back several years, as Georg Hann has been dead over two. Robert Heger, a distinguished German conductor, proves himself equally at home in Verdi. The recording is good, better balanced than most we have had from German sources.

Moussorgsky and Verdi, with their

greater melodic intensity and incisiveness, appeal more to modern listeners than Gluck with his melodic rhetoric. Though Gluck wrote many spacious and noble melodies, his operas on the stage in modern times are no more interesting than Handel's. The latter's frequently animated contrapuntal style, however, often suggests more dramatic action than Gluck does with his homophonic writing. In *Alceste*, the many arias of the heroine and of the other protagonists are consistently cut from the same cloth. No one can deny the spaciousness and nobility of much of this music, but its lack of rhythmic variety defeats true dramatic action.

To serve ideally Gluck's operas, a phonographic presentation should have singers whose tonal quality is consistently expressive, broad and sustained in style. Gluck, as much as Mozart, asks for perfection of phrase, resposful dignity and true vocal beauty — in other words *bel canto*. It is not enough to have competent singers, brought up on the vehement style of later-day composers. First-rate orchestral direction, which is found here, does not suffice in a Gluck opera — the singers are of prime importance. The memory of Flagstad's *Alceste* with its noble spaciousness and beauty of tone is too close to accept graciously the vocal shortcomings of Ethel Semser, for all her naturally endowed vocal richness. Her constant slurring of line and her spread upper tones are not in the proud tradition of the great singers of Gluck's operas. Since Suzanne Balguérie, no French soprano to my knowledge has had the simple, sustained and expressive style for which Gluck's music was originally calculated. Demigny, as the High Priest, comes closest to achieving this. Enzo Sari has an agreeable tenor voice, but the high tessitura places a strain on his vocal resources. The choral singing and the work of the orchestra, considering the latter is a pickup organization, are among the most satisfying qualities of the performance; they testify to the musical efficiency of the conductor.

The recording is generally satisfactory, though it does not suggest the atmosphere of the theatre.

—P.H.R.

A Giesecking Festival

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Concerto No. 4* in G, Op. 58; Columbia LP disc ML4535, \$5.45. **MOZART:** *Piano Concerto No. 21* in A, K.488 and **FRANCK:** *Symphonic Variations*; ML 4536, \$5.45. **DEBUSSY:** *Preludes—Book 1*; ML 4537, \$5.45. *Preludes—Book 2*; ML 4538, \$5.45. *Children's Corner Suite* and *Suite Bergamesque*; ML 4539, \$5.45. **SCHUMANN:** *Scenes of Childhood*, Op. 15 and **BRAHMS:** *Intermezzo*, Op. 117; ML 4540, \$5.45. **Walter Giesecking** (piano), with **Philharmonia Orchestra** conducted by **Herbert von Karajan** on ML 4535/6.

▲THE ART of Walter Giesecking has long been recognized as among the very richest in the field of keyboard endeavor. It was only a matter of time before Columbia would come up with the fine idea of bringing listeners up-to-date on the condition of the great German pianist's work today. The company has selected carefully—re-recording many of Giesecking's earlier gramophonic triumphs and giving his thoughts in three other musical quarters.

It seems a pity that we have had so few Mozart piano concertos from Giesecking, for his talents are wonderfully employed in this medium. In the new recording of the ever wonderful *A major concerto*, Giesecking demonstrates his taste in not treating the piano as a super dreadnought but as a musical instrument capable of balancing with a medium-sized orchestra. Though Karajan's orchestral framework is not always geared precisely with the pianist's work, this issue can be enjoyed for Giesecking's limpid fingerwork, superb pedaling, and clean phraseology. His performance of the lovely second movement alone would place it well ahead of all other existing versions.

Giesecking's performances of the *Scenes of Childhood* and the Brahms *Op. 117 Intermezzi* are also new to record listeners. Except for a couple of blurred passages and some regrettable time changes in *Frightened*, his Schumann is accurate and, more

important, expressively tinted in an appropriately inward manner. The inter-mezzis are notable too for warmth of sentiment and tonal beauty, but they lack a certain fire and a cohesion that would give their slack forms a more definite shape.

Gieseking's playing of the rest of these offerings is well known, but I would like to point out that the Franck selection and all of the Debussy are (with the aid of modern engineering) perhaps even better than one remembered them. A born lyricist with a technique of hand and foot apparently incapable of making an ugly sound, Gieseking offers the best Debussy—now as before the war—that this writer has heard. Is it possible to make *Danseuses de Delphes* seem more graceful, *Puerto del Vino* more strong or colorful, or *Fireworks* more incandescent?

Though Gieseking's playing of the Beethoven *G major piano concerto* is more effective on this new disc than it was in his performance with Karl Boehm before the war, it still is not completely effective and is shy of Artur Schnabel's best. Gieseking persists in not using the Beethoven cadenza in the first movement and again softens the outlines of this strong, genial score by too liberal use of nuances of rhythm and tone color.

The recording—everywhere at least satisfactory—is outstanding in both books of the *Preludes* and the Beethoven concerto.

—C.J.L.

The Student Rossini

ROSSINI: *Six Quartets for flute, clarinet, bassoon, and French Horn; Members of the New Art Wind Quintet—Murray Panitz, Aldo Simonelli, Tina di Dario, Robert Taylor.* Classic Editions set 1010, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲THE MORE adventuresome listeners will be familiar with recordings of two of these quartets—Nos. 2 and 5—made by the Paris Wind Quartet for Concert Hall (D-13, Limited Edition). Well played and

recorded, that release was more than a welcome novelty. For, despite the fact that these works, written by Rossini in his 'teens, show influences of Haydn and Mozart without any similar depth of feeling, they are filled with an Italian melodic freedom, a fine sense of interplay between instruments and a contagious gaiety and joy of living. Novelties to be sure, but diverting ones! The recording in the Classic set is not quite as brilliant as the Concert Hall issue, being at a slightly lower level, but it is clear and well balanced. The playing of the present group is proficient, well integrated and tonally pleasing. The flutist in the French group, Julien Brun, has more tonal fluency and nuance, but Murray Panitz has a clear, bright tone and equal assurance. Rossini originally wrote these works for strings (this was at a time when he had his own Quartet in which he played viola) but later rescored them for wind instruments, in which guise they are greatly preferred. Each has three movements, the first of which is in sonata form, the second in song-form, and the finale a Rondo or quick Allegro. In one case, *Quartet No. 6*, the finale is a Theme and Variations.

—P.H.R.

Fauré's "Requiem"

FAURÉ: *Requiem; Nadine Sautereau* (soprano), *Bernhard Demigny* (baritone), *Paris Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra* conducted by *René Leibowitz*. Oceanic LP disc 26, \$5.95. **The Same;** *Les Chanteurs de Lyon, Suzanne Dupont* (soprano), *M. Didier* (baritone), *Eduouard Commette* (organ), *E. Bourmauck* (conductor). Columbia LP disc ML-4529, \$5.45.

▲THE OCEANIC release is in all ways a superior recording of the *Requiem*. It is finely conceived in performance and excellently realized by well-trained forces, and clearly and spaciouly reproduced. The singing is more precise and more vital

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Record Notes and Reviews

THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Couper

Orchestra

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 45 in F sharp minor (Farewell)*; **WAGNER:** *Siegfried Idyll*; **Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra** with members of **L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande** conducted by **Karl Muenchinger**. London LP LL-525, \$5.95.

▲AT LONG LAST, a recording of Haydn's inimitable "Farewell" symphony that does notable justice to the music. Neither of the previous LP issues were worthy of the name of Haydn. Both as a recording and a performance this is a Haydn issue to be honored. The reproduction has spaciousness though the tonal quality is not as rich as it might have been. But one suspects the size of the orchestra has something to do with this, for though the Stuttgart ensemble has been augmented it has not been increased to a large extent. Muenchinger is always neat and tidy in his workmanship, but here he seems to unbend in his rhythmic fluency, and the whole work conveys genuine affection for the music. Not since Sir Henry Wood's wonderful recorded version (Columbia set 205—long withdrawn)

have I heard in the concert hall or on records as fine a performance. The poise in the playing of the last movement, where the instrumental resources gradually diminish until there are only two violins playing, is especially praiseworthy. The story of how Haydn wrote this finale as a protest to his Prince against the latter's refusal to allow the musician's family at Esterhaz is told in the notes. It must have been a memorable evening in the Esterhazy establishment.

Muenchinger uses the original version of Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*, which calls for only 23 instruments. His performance is smoothly played and well recorded, but there are some places where the balance does not always seem quite perfect. The conductor's feeling for this score suggests reverence, yet he does not sentimentalize the music. —P.H.R.

HOLLYWOOD COMPOSERS: *Music by La Violette; Delmar; Laszlo and Schoop; Frankenland State Orchestra, Erich Kloss (cond.)*; Lyricord LP disc LL29, \$5.95.

▲THE TIE-IN is that all four composers have written movie music. None of these works were for films but they sound as though they were. Wesley La Violette's eclectic *Music from the High Sierras* is a high-minded composition which only

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occasionally falls into French *clichés*; Delmar's *Hungarian Sketches* are more traditional and rarely betray the fact that he was a pupil of Bartok and Kodaly. In his *Improvisations* Alexander Laszlo wades through rather tepid imitations of a number of composers' styles as applied to *Oh, Susannah!* The only convincing ones are those of Schubert and Brahms, which probably gives an index to the gifts of Mr. Laszlo. Paul Schoop is represented by two works: *Fata Morgana* is a lugubrious tone-poem but the *March Ballet* is good light fun. The performances are good. The orchestra has to play well for these Hollywood boys know how to put a shine on their orchestration. The recording is satisfactory.

—D.R.

PFITZNER: *Kleine Sinfonie, Op. 44*; Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra conducted by Herman Abendroth; *Symphony in C, Op. 46*; Saxon State Orchestra conducted by Karl Boehm. Urania LP 7044, \$5.95.

▲THE RECORDING does not suggest the spaciousness of a large hall in either case and the string tone is not as rich as in other recordings by both orchestras. This is the type of reproduction often acquired from radio performances, not acceptable once one becomes used to it. Both performances seem to me well planned and played. These German conductors know their German music, and Pfitzner is German to the core. Born in 1869, Pfitzner wrote his *Kleine Sinfonie* in 1939 and his *C major Symphony* in 1941. Yet, these works harken back to the 19th century, for their composer was no admirer of modern ways. Pfitzner, though influenced by Wagner, was, in more ways than one, a descendant of Schumann and Brahms, but he was at the same time sufficiently gifted to develop a style of his own. His *Kleine Sinfonie* with its long, flowing lines has a lyrical charm. Both works are uninterrupted though they are divided into fast, slow, fast sections. There is more naïveté in the *Kleine Sinfonia* than in the *C major Symphony* which, while shorter, is more compact and more philosophical. The former owns a beautifully poetic middle section and a gay finale. The latter, August, 1952

deeply meditative, is a work that might well grow on one with its Wagnerian characteristics which are truly symphonic and never operative.

—P.H.R.

RAVEL: *Rapsodie Espagnol; La Valse*; SAINT-SAENS: *La Princesse jaune—Overture, Op. 30*; BERLIOZ: *Beatrice and Benedict—Overture*; LALO: *Le Roi d'Ys—Overture*; Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Munch. RCA Victor LP LM-1700, \$5.67.

▲PREVAILING swishing in the grooves of the first side of this record is annoying in the *pianissimo* passages, otherwise the recording is excellent. On commercial equipment the swishing may not be so apparent as on extended range. Munch's performance of the Ravel *Rapsodie* is overshadowed by Ansermet's more sensitive and better paced reading, in which the prevailing delicacy of the scoring is rightfully reproduced. It is a matter of dynamic shading, a fact that D.R. in his recent review of the Ansermet seems to have missed. The Munch performance is not similarly handled in recording as the *pianissimi* are lifted. The inclusion of *La Valse* on the same side as the *Rapsodie* does not serve this intricate score advantageously in reproduction; much detail is lost in the latter part which was clearer in the original 45 rpm issue. Munch's reading is faster paced than any on records and, while it is effective as a *tour de force*, does not wear well.

In the overtures, Munch is at his best and the reproduction is excellent in all except the Berlioz overture where the loud passages are rather tame. His rendition of Saint-Saens' overture to a forgotten opera is more imaginatively played than an earlier issue by Albert Wolf, and the wonderful playing of the Boston Symphony makes his version of the Lalo the preferred one.

—P.H.R.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOFF: *Capriccio Espagnole*; TCHAIKOVSKY: *Marche Slav*; Philharmonia Orchestra, Wilhelm Schuechter (cond.); MGM 10" LP disc, E138, \$3.00.

▲THIS rather tame reading of two fiery

favorites is distinguished mostly by the well-disciplined playing of the Philharmonia group. Schuchter cannot touch Desormiere on the Rimsky and the Tchaikovsky receives a much finer reading by Fiedler, in an identical coupling. It would be interesting to hear the conductor's German scores: he has a definite flair for the big sound. The recording is fuller than MGM's usual. —D.R.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOFF: *Christmas Eve, suite from the opera; Sinfoniella*; **Radio Berlin Symphony, Leopold Ludwig** (cond.); Urania LP disc URLP 7045, \$5.95.

▲BASED on a Gogol story, the opera, *Christmas Eve*, is in the great Russian tradition of the rural *grotesquerie*, products of the genre including such dissimilar works as Liadov's *Baba Yaga*, Stravinsky's *Rénard* and Prokofiev's *Choul*. The suite, consisting of the overture and divertissement from the final act, is filled with such delightful musical folklore as the *Mazurka of the Stars*, *Polonaise of the Devil* and *Flight of the Oen Forks*. Though this 1895 score has neither the imagination of *Sadko* nor the brilliance of *Coq d'Or*, it is fun to listen to and should make excellent theatre. The 1879 *Sinfoniella* is one of Rimsky's rare excursions into absolute music. This three-movement work, very nicely constructed, sounds a bit like Tchaikovsky.

Ludwig should make a good theatre conductor, judging from his incisive treatment of the suite. It is for this reason that I prefer his reading of the *Sinfoniella* to Swoboda's. He treats it like ballet music. —D.R.

ROSSINI: *William Tell, overture and ballet music; Il Signor Bruschino, overture*; **Royal Opera Orchestra, Warwick Braithwaite** (cond.); MGM 10" LP disc E149, \$3.00.

▲THOUGH these are not electrifying readings they are very competent. The dance music, selections from the first and third acts, comes off best for Braithwaite is preeminently a ballet conductor. *Il Signor Bruschino* is one of the lesser-known operas and its overture is a typical bubb-

ling bit of Rossiniana. The recording is only fair. —D.R.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Hamlet — Fantasy Overture, Op. 67; Overture Solennelle (1812), Op. 49*; **London Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Sir Adrian Boult**. London LP LL-582, \$5.95.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Swan Lake (Complete Ballet)*; **London Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Anatole Fistoulari**. London LP set LL-565/66, \$11.90.

▲THESE are, judged from any standards, truly remarkable Tchaikovsky recordings. The wide range of dynamics in the 1812 *Overture* is realistically handled, and in the *Hamlet* and *Swan Lake* the perceptivity of dynamic refinement of the two conductors is respected by the engineers. Boult's performance of the *Hamlet* is more polished than the recent Rachmilovitch (Mercury). The strict timing of his performance of the 1812 lends proper dignity to this music, which too often is distorted for theatrical effects. Ballet fans should welcome the complete version of the composer's *Swan Lake*, it is in every way a splendid performance, perhaps more related to the concert hall than the theatre but nonetheless enjoyable. A work like this on records is very apt to become background music to a lot of listeners. It is probably reserved for those who know the ballet to enjoy intimately the composer's genius, which enabled him to devise almost consistently lovely music definitely befitting its purpose. —P.H.R.

Miscellany

BARBER: *First Symphony*; **Stockholm Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Nils Lehmann**; *Dover Beach*; **Paul King** (baritone) with **Hartt String Quartet**; *Songs — Rain Has Fallen, Sleep Now, and I Hear an Army, Op. 10, Nos. 1,2,3*; **Paul King** with **Samuel Quincey** at the piano. Classic Editions LP 1011, \$5.95.

BERLIOZ: *Four Overtures — The Corsair, Op. 21; The Roman Carnival, Op. 9*;

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King Lear, Op. 4; Beatrice and Benedict; Lamoureux Orchestra conducted by Jean Martinon. Urania LP 7048, \$5.95.

LISZT: *Rhapsodie Espagnole*; **MOZART:** *Concerto in D, K. 537 (Coronation)*; **Gina Bachauer** (piano) with the **New London Orchestra** conducted by **Alec Sherman**. RCA Victor LP LM-9000, \$5.67.

REGER: *Ballet Suite, Op. 130; Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra* conducted by **Ernst Schrader**; **PfITZNER:** *Das Kaetchen von Heilbronn—Overture*; **Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Hans Pfitzner**; *Das Christelflein—Overture*; **Symphony Orchestra of Radio Berlin** conducted by **Arthur Rother**. Urania LP 7050, \$5.95.

REGER: *Serenade for Orchestra, Op. 95; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra* conducted by **Eugen Jochum**. Urania LP 7052, \$5.95.

REGER: *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Mozart, Op. 132; Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra* conducted by **Eduard van Beinum**. Decca LP 9565, \$5.85.

SPOHR: *Violin Concerto No. 8 in the Form of a Vocal Scene, Op. 47; Kurt Stiehler, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra* conducted by **Paul Schmitz**; *Violin Concerto No. 7 in E minor, Op. 38; Rudolf Schulz, Symphony Orchestra of Radio Berlin* conducted by **Robert Heger**. Urania LP 7049, \$5.95.

▲**REMEMBERING** the recent releases by London of Barber's *Second Symphony* and the *Cello Concerto*, the performances on this new disc disappoint. The recording in the symphony has resonant depth but lacks the clarity of the older Bruno Walter-Philharmonic-Symphony issue (Columbia MX-252, not an LP.) The string tone is sharper and more edgy, and Lehman's overly incisive performance often makes Barber's music sound too angular. Walter's reading is definitely more cordial. *Dover Beach*, a thoughtfully expressive setting of a poem by Matthew Arnold, was once recorded for Victor by the composer and the Curtis String Quartet. Barber

possessed an ingratiating baritone voice which he tastefully employed. Mr. King with his throaty and unsteady tones fails to make a similar impression, and in the three later songs, which are imaginative settings of poems by James Joyce, the lugubrious quality of his singing does not serve the music advantageously. The four Berlioz overtures are generally well played and recorded. However, Martinon seems slightly hampered with the strings, which do not always respond with true rhythmic alacrity. Hence, the conductor's sensitivity of phrasing is not always done justice to. The inclusion of the dramatic *King Lear Overture* as well as the *Roman Carnival* should make this disc nonetheless welcome. RCA Victor's 45 rpm release of the Liszt *Rhapsodie Espagnole* has an edge in piano quality on the LP, but the latter serves the music best. Miss Bachauer, a wonderful Liszt performer, is less persuasive as a Mozart interpreter. Her playing is far too heavy-handed, though her runs are immaculately clear and clean. Only Wanda Landowska (Victor LP LCT-1029) succeeds in making this work more musically interesting and less lengthy than any of her competitors. Pfitzner is discussed elsewhere in symphony releases. The Urania disc with music of Reger and Pfitzner (who died in 1949) sustains interest only for the offering in which the composer's extraordinary gifts as a conductor are exploited. With its background of lusty chivalry, the overture to *Das Kaetchen von Heilbronn* reveals a more imaginative Pfitzner—albeit romantic in thought and purpose but conveying healthy influences from Strauss. Indeed, this overture takes on the characteristics of a tone poem, not too far removed from those of his famous contemporary. The other overture with its chattering counterpoint, its mystic and somber qualities, seems long drawn out. Though neatly played it does not sustain interest like the first. Reger's *Ballet Suite*, with its Harlequin, Columbine, Pierrot and Pierrette associations, "has an intimate, fragile quality quite alien to its period and nationality; orchestral effects are sparingly, even modestly, employed, the melodies stretched over a slender web of fragile

phrases tinted with a pale wash of delicate coloring" (A.W.P.—Dec. '49 *ARG*). The *Serenade* of Reger is a far more listenable piece though emotionally it too is somewhat timid. Jochum is now represented with two performances of this work; the other, performed with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, is on Capitol LP 8026. I fail to find any startling change in the performance or recording of either issue. . . The Reger *Variations* were originally reviewed in July 1949, at which time it was released on 78 rpm Deutsche Grammophon discs. The transfer to LP has been competently achieved by Decca's engineers. Though Reger's metamorphosis of Mozart's theme is rather long and learned, ending in a fugal "complex workout," this opus repays familiarity. As A.W.P. said in the review quoted above: "Reger's work is an endless source of flowing melody spiced with countless imaginative details, the discovery of which will take many absorbing hearings." Van Beinum's performance is clearly articulated and phrased with affectionate care. . . Of the two Spohr violin concertos, only No. 8, written in the style of a *scena cantante*, remains known today. Decca should look up the recording of this work by the late Georg Kulenkampff, who gave it its best performance on records. Both Mr. Stiehler and Mr. Schulz are proficient violinists but neither is in the class of Kulenkampff. The former lacks the ardor and beauty of tone requisite to No. 8, though musically he does not let us down. Mr. Schulz does a commendable job on a concerto which suggests religious influences—a more reserved and dignified opus which does not look beyond its time. Both works are well recorded. —P.H.R.

Concerto

BACH: *Concertos Nos. 3 and 6 for Harpsichord and Strings; Maria van der Lyck* (harpsichord) with the *Tonstudio Orchestra*, Hans Michael (cond.); Period LP disc SPLP 547, \$5.95.

▲BOTH of these concertos are trans-

criptions, No. 3 in *D major* of the *E major Violin Concerto* and No. 6 in *F major* of the fourth *Brandenburg*. Though they are quite familiar, if somewhat less successful to some in their transcribed form, the sixth is making its first LP appearance. This is a well ordered rather machine-like performance. The rhythm is very accurate but there is not much variety in tone. Often the climaxes are heavily-handed though the softer passages are interpreted with great delicacy. The recording favors the solo instrument, sometimes at the expense of the orchestra, but is otherwise lifelike. —D.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto in D, Op. 61; Ruggiero Ricci* (violin) and the *London Philharmonic Orchestra* conducted by Sir *Adrian Boult*. London LP LL-562, \$5.95.

▲ONE ADMIRES the spirit of London in permitting its two violinists, Campoli and Ricci, to duplicate this concerto. Of the two versions, this is the finest reproduced, indeed it has an edge over all other issues. Boult's orchestral accompaniment is better paced than Krips', and Ricci is in fine form. Though the ardor of the violinist's playing has much of the spirit of youth in it—this is all to the good. There is an earnestness in his musicianship which he has never before exploited similarly on records. One wonders at the incentive that inspires a younger player, but whoever it may have been Ricci retains his own individuality and gives us a performance which, in its own right, merits praise. When one can listen to a performance and forget others who have come before, one realizes the worth of the participating artists. —P.H.R.

HANDEL: *Concertos for Strings and Winds in F and B-flat; Copenhagen Collegium Musicum, Lavad Friissholm* (cond.); Haydn Society LP disc HSL-1049, \$5.95.

▲THOUGH HANDEL is famous for borrowing from himself, he really achieves a sort of record in these two charming concertos. Almost every movement in each has been traced to another work. Listeners will be surprised, and delighted,

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Mozart *Symphony No. 40* AND Brahms *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*—**Wilhelm Furtwängler** conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

Schubert "*Unfinished*" *Symphony* AND Nicolai *The Merry Wives of Windsor Overture*; Schubert "*Rosamunde*"; Ballet Music No. 2 AND *Entr'acte No. 3*; Weber *Oberon Overture*—**Wilhelm Furtwängler** conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 4*—**Wilhelm Furtwängler** conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

Nielsen *Symphony No. 4*—Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra; **Launy Grøndahl**, Cond.

Dvořák *Symphony No. 4*—The Philharmonia Orchestra; **Rafael Kubelik**, Cond.

CONCERTO

Mozart *Concerto No. 25 in C, K. 503*—**Edwin Fischer**, Pianist; The Philharmonia Orchestra; **Josef Krips**, Cond. AND J. S. Bach *Concerto for Three Pianos in C*—**Edwin Fischer**, **Ronald Smith**, **Denis Matthews**, Pianists with The Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by **Edwin Fischer**.

Paganini *Concerto No. 2 in B Minor* AND *Vieuxtemps Concerto No. 4 in D Minor*. **Menuhin**, Violinist. The Philharmonia Orch.; **Fistoulari**, **Susskind**, Cond.

Mozart *Concerto No. 20 in D Minor, K. 466* AND Mozart *Concerto No. 24 in C Minor, K. 491*—**Artur Schnabel**, Pianist; The Philharmonia Orchestra; **Walter Susskind**, Cond.

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to find that the *allegro ma non troppo* of the B-flat work is also the opening chorus of *The Messiah*. These concertos really constitute a sort of "best-loved anthology" from the composer's workshop. The F major score is in nine movements and calls for horns in addition to oboes and bassoons. The B-flat concerto, a livelier work, leaves out the horns and is in seven movements.

The performances could scarcely be bettered. They are vivid and incisive as the music itself, and though probably musicologically accurate, are not academic. Friisholm leads his members with a consummate skill and a genuine feeling. The recording too is excellent, particularly in its subtle delineation of the two horns.

—D.R.

MOZART: *Violin Concertos No. 1 in B flat, K. 207 and No. 2 in D major, K.211; Aida Stucki and the Ton-Studio Orchestra, Stuttgart, conducted by Gustav Lund. Period LP 549, \$5.95.*

MOZART: *Violin Concerto No. 7 in D, K. 271a; Aida Stucki and Ton-Studio Orchestra, Stuttgart, conducted by Gustav Lund; Rondo in C, K. 373; Adagio in E, K. 261; Rondo in B flat, K. 269; Gustav Swardstrom with same orchestra and conductor. Period LP 548, \$5.95.*

▲THE RECORDING is obviously a studio sound though clear-toned and generally clean in quality. The performances are capably forthright but hardly inspired. Stucki has a bright tone but her playing lacks nuance and sometimes she does not articulate details clearly. In the concertos nos. 1 and 2, which Mozart wrote for his own playing in 1775, neither the soloist nor the conductor suggest long acquaintance with these seldom-played works—dynamics are hardly considered and rhythm often drags or remains too four-square. In the dubious concerto no. 7 (Einstein feels that Mozart wrote the work but not in its known form) the playing is more assured though in no way imaginative. Swardstrom, performing two delightful rondos and an *Adagio* (devised as a substitute for the original slow movement of *Concerto No. 7 in A*), fiddles away with accuracy but omits

coloration and nuances. One feels that here are a group of capable musicians who should do better work. While demonstrating a feeling for style, none suggests having had long association with the music.

—P.H.R.

MOZART: *Clarinet Concerto in A Major; Louis Cahuzac (clarinet), Chamber Orchestra of the Danish State Radio, conducted by Mogens Woldike; HAYDN: Symphony No. 61 in D Major; Same orchestra and conductor. Haydn Society LP 1047, \$5.95.*

▲IT IS frequently nice to have new recordings of masterpieces which have been previously recorded in the not too distant past. Competition, as the saying goes, is the life of trade and we're being treated to liberal doses of it these days, with the buyer in the driver's seat as a consequence. There doesn't seem to be much point in duplicating a work like the Mozart *Clarinet Concerto*, however, for with all due respect to the excellencies of this version, and they are many, Mr. Cahuzac is far from being the clarinetist that Reginald Kell is. This recording is thoroughly commendable, however. Mogens Woldike, long familiar to collectors of imports for his work on Danish H.M.V., is a conductor of quality. Both in the Mozart concerto and in the Haydn *Symphony No. 61*, which backs it up, he leads his excellent ensemble in sensitive, persuasive performances that are greatly enhanced by fine resonant studio recording. The Haydn symphony is a highly attractive work representative of his middle period, dating from 1776.

—H.V.N.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Concerto in D minor (Concerto Academico); Joseph Fuchs (violin) and the Zimble String Sinfonietta; TANSMAN: Triptych for String Orchestra; Same orchestra. Decca LP DL-9625, \$5.85.*

▲VAUGHAN Williams' classical concerto, which harkens back to the style of 18th century, owns an unmistakable folkish quality. The music seems redolent of spring and summer landscapes in Old England. It is a work that grows on one, as do so many others of this truly indi-

vidual composer. Joseph Fuchs and the Zimmler Ensemble give a splendid performance—precise and beautifully balanced. The same can be said for the playing of the Tansman score which is Mr. Zimmler's show alone. This is by far the best version on records of this neo-classical score with its rhythmic vitality reminiscent of Stravinsky. I imagine that this work is a lot of fun to proficient players like the present ensemble, and the zestfulness of their performance conveys that impression. It is a performance which can hardly fail to impress the receptive listener. The recording in both works is excellent.

—P.H.R.

Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet in A, Op. 18, No. 5; Quartet in F minor, Op. 95; Barylli Quartet.* Westminster LP 5140, \$5.95.

▲WESTMINSTER seems to have acquired in the Barylli Quartet a well trained ensemble with style and resilience, quite different from the Vienna Konzerthaus group whose playing is more heavily weighted. While the present group does not have the polish of the Paganini Quartet, which has already made the *A major Quartet* (Victor LM-1052), they turn in a performance which has more stamina. Theirs is also a more vigorous performance than the recent issue by the Pascal's or, for that matter, the earlier Budapest version (Columbia ML-4073) of the *A minor Quartet*, one of Beethoven's most appealing with its humor and manly tenderness. Excellent recording.—P.H.R.

HANDEL: *Sonatas for Two Violins and Figured Bass; Willy and Margarete Schweya* (violins), *Jan Behr* (piano); Urania LP disc URLP 7046, \$5.95.

▲THE FOUR sonatas here recorded were written between 1710 and 1738, after Handel's Italian journey and his meeting with the Scarlattis and Corelli. They are very graceful and *italiante*. Three are from Op. 2, Nos. 4, 8, and 9. The fourth,

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which has a much more Handelian sound, being a sort of partita, is the third of Op. 5. The four are all of a style and the Schweydas play them all somewhat alike. I should have preferred a more florid rendering of the faster movements but could not ask for more lyricism in the slower ones. The piano, taking the place of the cello and or harpsichord, is properly discreet. The recording is good, particularly in the constant articulation between the two stringed instruments. —D.R.

MOZART: *Clarinet Quintet in A, K. 581; New Italian Quartet and Antoine de Bavier.* London LP LL-573, \$5.95.

▲THE RECORDING is well balanced and the tonal quality is clear and clean. There is a sensitivity of purpose in the engineering which honors *pianissimi* as well as *forte*. The performance owns a kind of perfection which comes from unanimity of purpose both in the technical and musical sense. In no other of the six LP versions of this work does this prevail as here. This is a truly Italianate performance with rhythmic lilt and singing tone, but somewhat lightweight for Mozart's poetic music. Even the poised beauty of the playing of the lovely *Larghetto* does not go below the surface. The clarinetist is a gifted player with a purity and beauty of tone and a feeling for nuance and coloration. One would like to hear him with a different quartet, and yet considering the mutual accord of the ensemble it is possible that his feeling for the music would not undergo a radical change. As sound goes, and technical ease and assurance, this performance with its genial, soaring disposition will probably have its appeal. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Oboe Quartet in F, K. 370; Harold Gomberg* (Oboe), *Felix Galimir* (Violin), *Gabriel Banat* (viola), *Alexander Kouguell* (cello); **TELEMANN:** *Sonata in C minor; Partita No. 5 in E minor; Harold Gomberg and Claude Jean Chiasson* (harpsichord). Decca LP DL-9618, \$5.85.

▲MOZART'S *Oboe Quartet*, with its heavenly slow movement, is better played by Mr. Gomberg and his colleagues than

it was in an earlier release by a Viennese group. It is perhaps unfortunate that Leon Goossens once set a precedent in performance of this work, for none since him has brought to this music his "variety of nuance and expressive coloration." Mr. Gomberg is a skilled performer with a fine tonal quality but his playing lacks shading and variety in sound. He is heard to best advantage in the lesser Telemann compositions, especially the *Partita* with its showy technical display passages. Mr. Chiasson is an engaging co-partner, who fits his style to that of the oboist. Realistic recording, well balanced. —P.H.R.

SPOHR: *Grande Nonette*; Arnold Eidus (violin), David Mankowitz (viola), George Ricci (cello), Philip Sklar (bass), Harold Bennett (flute), Harry Shulman (oboe), David Weber (clarinet), Elias Carmen (Bassoon), Fred Klein (horn); *Six Songs for Mezzo-Soprano, Clarinet and Piano*; Alice Howland, David Weber, and Leopold Mittman. Stradivari LP 609, \$5.95.

▲THE *Grande Nonette* can be rated with the composer's *Double Quartets*, which have been called the most acceptable of his chamber works. It has vigor and grace in the manner of the earlier Beethoven, and the part writing is similarly competent and well integrated. This is a pleasant opus but lacking in true creative venture. Spohr was of the opinion that his double quartets and his nonette were more effective than a string quartet alone, but one suspects his reasoning on the effectual in this case was based on scoring rather than on an urge of imaginative creation. "An example of old wine in a new bottle," says the annotator, but the bottle is already at least a 100 years old.

The six lieder are far more interesting compositions. Like his clarinet concertos, they were written for a famous clarinet virtuoso, as a result of a commission that the latter received from the Princess von Sonderhausen. It is most unfortunate that translations of these songs are not given as one has little idea of how Spohr treated the texts, chosen from different poets. The writing for the voice and the

clarinet are exceptionally proficient, and once again one thinks of Beethoven though Spohr writes more understandingly for the voice. Miss Howland is a musicianly singer and Mr. Weber is a competent player, but neither varies the expressive qualities of the music sufficiently to make their performances rise above musical competency. —P.H.R.

TARTINI: *Sonatas for Violin and Harpsichord in G minor, A minor, B minor, and D major*; Peter Rybar (violin) and Franz Holletschek (harpsichord) Westminster LP disc WL 5141, \$5.95.

▲AS A companion disc to their highly successful recording of the composer's violin concerto and E major and minor sonatas, Westminster has issued four more of these unknown and charming works. Of particular interest are the A minor with its daring double stops and *Musette* feeling, and the limpid D major with its exquisite *cantabile*. Tartini wrote about half a hundred sonatas. If they are all as lovely as these he must be a very neglected composer indeed. As in their former disc, Rybar and Holletschek interpret in perfect ensemble with consummate tone and, again, the recording is really fine. —D.R.

Keyboard

BACH: *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*; **MOZART:** *Fantasia in C Minor* (K.475); Abram Chasins (piano). Mercury LP disc MG-15031, \$4.85.

BRAHMS: *Rhapsody in B Minor, Op. 79, No. 1; Rhapsody in G Minor, Op. 79, No. 2; Rhapsody in E-Flat, Op. 119, No. 4*; Abram Chasins (piano). Mercury LP disc MG-15030, \$4.85.

▲IT IS an excellent idea of Mercury's to get Abram Chasins back on discs after a too-lengthy absence, as he is one of the top-notch American pianists. The releases for Mercury by Chasins alone and with his wife, Constance Keene, in two piano works are welcome indeed.

In the items here listed, Chasins' readings are unvaryingly authoritative.

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The Bach is particularly satisfying, being projected with a truly splendid degree of sweep and power, which could be matched by few pianists currently active on the concert stage. The Brahms and Mozart are of equal merit. It is gratifying that Chasins' duties as a radio station executive still leave him with time to "keep up" his piano. The recording is good, though not characteristic of Mercury's best to date.

—H.V.N.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata No. 22 in F major, Op. 54; Sonata No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90; Sonata No. 16 in G Major (Op. 31, No. 1); Hugo Steurer* (piano). Urania LP 7051, \$5.95.

▲MR. STEURER may be (as the program notes tell us) "one of Germany's leading interpreters of Beethoven's piano music" but there is little evidence of it to be found on this disc. It is true, of course, that these sonatas are not the most taxing in regard to interpretive powers, though Steurer has some interesting thoughts on them from time to time. The general absence of a sense of projection, attributable to technical inadequacy, adds up to disappointing performances.

—H.V.N.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in B flat, Op. 106* (Hammerklavier); **Egon Petri** (piano). Columbia LP ML-4479, \$5.45.

▲MR. PETRI, who has been ill and in retirement for a number of years, gives in some ways a remarkable performance of this sonata, which is decidedly one of Beethoven's most difficult works. Always an artist of sensitivity, the pianist often reveals poetic qualities of individual character, but one feels much of the symphonic drive of the music taxes his resources, and in the three-voiced fugue of the finale his playing is not as successful as others. Moreover, the piano tone is not as realistic or resonant in quality as Columbia's best piano reproduction. There is much to be learned by the student in the maturity of Petri's conception, far ahead of Gulda—whose performance is astounding for its exploitation of technique and richly resonant piano sound, but nonetheless a "young man's conception of the music."

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For the listener who appreciates maturity in conception with assured but unobtrusive technique, the Kempff version would seem a good buy.

—J.N.

BRAHMS: *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel; Julius Katchen* (piano). London 10" LP LS-552, \$4.95.

▲WHEN Katchen's recording of the Brahms *F minor Sonata* appeared two years ago, it was felt that a Brahms interpreter of considerable promise was being unveiled. That feeling is only partly substantiated by this recording. While the sonata was characterized throughout by an authoritative grasp of the Brahms idiom, exceptional in so young an artist, there is present in the *Variations* — particularly in the more lyrical ones — a hesitancy of rhythmic approach that detracts from the general effectiveness of the reading. Where a greater degree of dynamics is required, however, Katchen is completely satisfying, and the *Fugue* is an enormously compelling piece of pianism. Recording is excellent.

—H.V.N.

GRIFFES: *Piano Sonata; Roman Sketches; Leonid Hambro* (piano). Walden LP W-100, \$5.95.

▲THIS release, admirable from every point of view, with realistic piano recording, offers contrasting works by the man who, had he lived, might easily have become one of the greatest American composers. Of the material selected for this record, only *The White Peacock* (one of the four *Roman Sketches*) is particularly familiar. Why the other three sections — *Nightfall*, *The Fountain of the Acqua Paola*, and *Clouds* — are not better known is not understandable, for they are attractive works, in the same impressionistic and individual poetic style. As for the *Sonata*, which represented a turning point in Griffes' creative development, it is a work of great power and originality, though its angularity may impede immediate appreciation. Yet its neglect by concert artists presumably looking for unhackneyed material of merit is also not understandable.

The American Record Guide

The performances of Hambro, one of the best of the younger American pianists, are keenly imaginative, technically assured, and in every way give evidence of his devotion to the music at hand. —H.V.N.

HANDEL: *Suities for Harpsichord*; **Frank Pelleg** (harpsichord); Handel Society LP discs HDL 4 and 5, \$5.95 each.

▲THE WORKS here recorded are the first six of eight comprising the first book of harpsichord suites. Except for the fifth, which contains the popular "*Harmonious Blacksmith*," they are not too well-known and deserve attention. As filler on the second disc are two fugues from the Walsh collection—those in *D major* and *A minor*. Pelleg's is a very personal performance. He varies tempi, dynamics and repeats, as well as registers, according to his own ideas. This is a very thoughtful performance and most of the effects are well achieved. It is interesting to compare his reading of the second suite with that of Valenti (AI 123). The latter's reading is much less introspective and, consequently, somewhat more of the period. It is as though he were intent upon presenting Handel—in the most brilliant manner—rather than interpreting him. There will doubtless be listeners who somewhat resent Pelleg's presumption for the same reasons that some resent Landowska's Bach. There will doubtless be others who prefer his essentially intuitive playing. The recording is vivid. —D.R.

LISZT: *Years of Pilgrimage* (2nd Year) Sonnets of Petrarca Nos. 47, 104, and 123; **SCHUMANN:** *Papillons*, Op. 2; *Arabesque*, Op. 18; **Wilhelm Kempff** (piano). London LP LLP-515, \$5.95.

▲AS IN his previous Liszt program (London LLP-315), Kempff shows his ability to combine smooth technique and poetic feeling in three of Liszt's expansively rhapsodic Italian pieces. Originally, these were songs, but later Liszt revised them for piano and they became favorites of his own. Kempff's performances of the two Schumann works are equally impressive with their delicate colorations and rhythmic grace, though Novaes with her feminine guile achieves in *Papillons* a more

fairy-like touch in the opening and elsewhere where Schumann has pictured the dainty grace of the butterflies. Kempff, however, profits by finer and more realistic recording quality. —J.N.

LISZT: *Sonata in B Minor*; **Andor Foldes** (piano). Decca LP DL-7528, \$3.85.

▲THE LISZT sonata is not too much in favor with pianists these days. There is a grandiloquence of expression in it, a rhetorical excess, if you will, that is apparently alien to the contemporary spirit and there are but few artists today able

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to turn back the clock far enough to recreate the Lisztian era, of which this work is possibly the ultimate expression. Horowitz does it with a degree of success, as his recording testifies. Foldes, an excellent pianist, who can always be counted upon for a sincere, workmanlike performance in anything he undertakes, does his best to bring this formidable relic to life, but not with complete success.

The work, needless to say, is well within the limits of his technical resources, which are considerable, and his playing is impeccable from this point of view. However, the aforementioned "grandiloquence" is conspicuously missing, and for this reason his reading as a whole suffers. A reissue from Deutsche Grammophon, this does not sound like a new recording.

—H.V.N.

SCHUMANN: *Kreisleriana*; *Romance*, Op. 28, No. 2; *Toccata*, Op. 7, **Joerg Demus** (piano). Westminster LP WL-5142.

▲THIS IS the first Schumann that Demus has done on LP but it measures up in every way to the generally excellent Mozart and Schubert readings that have been his stock in trade heretofore. He appears to have the qualifications necessary for a first-rate Schumann interpreter, rhythmic adaptability and a truly romantic spirit. *Kreisleriana* (as Kurt List points out in his program notes) is essentially a study in rhythm and Demus infuses the entire performance with a rhythmic vitality that makes it glow. The *Toccata*, which frequently degenerates into a mere show-piece at the hands of some of our big-name virtuosos, is taken at a fairly deliberate tempo, but emerges with its measure of poetry, an element which is utterly destroyed in the hair-raising tempi of the "speed boys." The recording is excellent.

—H.V.N.



BACH: *Cantata 201, Der Streit zwischen Phoebus und Pan*; **Anny Schlemm** (soprano), **Diana Eustrati** (contralto),

Herbert Reinhold (tenor), **Gert Lutze** (tenor), **Karl Wolfram** (baritone), **Gerhard Niese** (baritone) and **Bach Guild Chorus and Orchestra** conducted by **Helmut Koch**. Bach Guild LP disc BG 514, \$5.95. **BACH:** *Cantata 205, Der zufriedengestellte Aeolus*; **Anny Schlemm** (soprano), **Diana Eustrati** (contralto), **Gert Lutze** (tenor), **Karl Wolfram** (baritone) and **Bach Guild Chorus and Orchestra** conducted by **Helmut Koch**. Bach Guild LP disc BG 513, \$5.95.

▲THESE recordings rejoice in particularly big and broad sound, with just enough suggestion of an echo to make a good blend. For all that, the words of the two secular cantatas are distinct throughout. The solo voices, as usual, are a bit close to us and they overbalance the accompanying instruments, but by no means to the extent so often customary. The sound of the orchestra, too, is good, with imposing high trumpets (though here one should watch out for a suggestion of pitch waver). The singers, in the spirit of the occasion, perform very seriously and with generally delightful effect.

Phoebus and Pan, it will be remembered, is a version of the ancient story of the contest in song between these two characters, and it serves Bach (as *Meistersinger* served Wagner) as an opportunity to put critics in their place. It is altogether delightful to find Bach spoofing his own serious style as well as that of his predecessors. Miss Schlemm sings Momus' delicious air, *Patron, das macht der Wind*, with spirit, though she does not always aim too accurately in the eternally skipping melody, and Mr. Niese, in *Phoebus' Mit Verlangen*, is unable to overcome the impression that this fine aria is not an easy one.

Aeolus appeared was composed for a birthday celebration, and it is full of genial good humor. Again the soloists do not overcome all the technical difficulties—the bass aria *Wie will ich lustig lachen* sounds rather like work and the tenor coloratura is not too well managed—but the overall impression is a happy one.

—P.L.M.

Look *what's new this month*
on **RCA VICTOR** records

Brailowsky Schumann: **Carnaval, Op. 9.** WDM 9004, \$2.83. Schumann: **Fantasia in C, Op. 17.** Alexander Brailowsky, pianist. WDM 9003, \$3.99. Together on LM 9003, \$5.72.

Peerce Jan Peerce Sings **Hebrew Melodies.** Kol Nidrei; Meyerke, Mein Zun; A Dudele; Glick; Eili, Eili; A Shepherd, A Dreamer; A Cantor For A Sabbath; A Plea To God. With Orchestra. WDM 7003, \$5.14. LM 7003, \$4.67.

Traubel The Gay Nineties with Helen Traubel. Take Me Out To The Ball Game; Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home; A Bird In A Gilded Cage; My Pony Boy; Waiting For The Robert E. Lee; Mother Was A Lady; The Curse Of An Aching Heart; After The Ball. **Arthur Fiedler** conducting the RCA Victor Orchestra. WDM 7005, \$5.14. LM 7005, \$4.67.

Whittemore & Lowe 20th Century Music for Two Pianos. Arthur Whittemore and Jack Lowe, duo-pianists. La Valse (Ravel), Three Mikrokosmos (Bartók), Billy The Kid (Copland), Sonata for Two Pianos, 1943-44 (Stravinsky), Sonata, 1918 (Poulenc), and The Poisoned Fountain (Bax). WDM 1705, \$5.14. LM 1705, \$5.72.

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Prices suggested list, including Federal Excise tax. Add local tax. Subject to Government Price Ceiling Regulations.



BACH: *Cantata No. 210 (Hochzeits Kantate)*; **Magda Laszlo** (soprano) with **Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera** conducted by **Hermann Scherchen**. Westminster LP 5138, \$5.95.

▲ **WHAT** an attractive Bach cantata this one is. The wedding occasion for which it was written is not told, but judging from the final air *Be happy, O noble couple* one suspects nobility was involved. The work is divided into five recitatives and arias for soprano voice. The accompanying orchestra is full of attractive resources and the vocal writing in the arias is considerably developed. Miss Laszlo tends to find the going difficult, for only in two of the arias does she seem at ease. Hers is a naturally lovely voice but her production is not smooth or always certain. It may be that the conductor is too exacting—he is known as somewhat of a task-master in both rehearsals and performance, and he likes to complete a job that is once started. He probably does not take into consideration the limitations of a singer from rehearsal to performance. The recording is well worth hearing, but whether it will wear well one hesitates to predict. Excellent reproduction. —J.N.

BACH: *Missa Brevis No. 1 in F; Sanctus No. 1 in C*. Renaissance LP X-44, \$5.95.

BACH: *Missa Brevis No. 2 in A; Sanctus No. 2 in D*. Renaissance LP X-45, \$5.95. **Agnes Giebel** (soprano), **Lotte Wolf-Matthaeus** (contralto), **Franz Kelch** (bass), **The Swabian Choral Singers, Tonstudio Orchestra**, Stuttgart, **Hans Grischkat**, Conductor.

▲ **THESE** are practically unknown works of Bach and would merit interest for that reason alone. The interest is heightened by the fact that they contain some serenely beautiful music, veritably hidden gems that may never have come to light except for LP. The contents of both masses are derived almost wholly from other works, principally Cantatas, and there is much here to rank in quality with Bach's greatest choral works, the *B Minor Mass* and *St. Matthew Passion*.

It is therefore to be regretted that the performances are not better than they are.

The conducting of Hans Grischkat is on the pedestrian side and the chorus is hardly first-rate, being (one assumes) a more or less amateur group of a type that abounds on the Continent. However, the soloists and orchestra are far more satisfactory, and the recording is good. As there is an obvious affection for the work at hand everywhere apparent, these performances can be recommended to the Bach enthusiast, who will likely regard them as "finds" of the first water. —H.V.N.

HANDEL: *Judas Maccabaeus; Phyllis Moffet* (soprano), **Beryl Jensen** (contralto), **William Olvis** (tenor), **Marvin Sorenson** (tenor), **Marvin Hayes** (basso), **Alexander Schreiner** (organ), **Bruce Prince Joseph** (harpisichord), **University of Utah Chorus and Utah Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by **Maurice Abravanel**. Handel Society LP set HDL 12, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲ **THIS SEEMS** an odd performance to be recorded under the auspices of the Handel Society, for though an effort seems to have been made to perform the oratorio in authentic style, with a proper sized orchestra and not too overwhelming a chorus, the score has been cut, as it usually is in such University-community performances, even to the trimming down of most of the *da capo* arias. On occasion, too, the nineteenth century tradition of high endings is followed. When these things are noted, however, there is much to be said in favor of the Utah forces. The choral work is clear and nicely balanced with the orchestra (though I thought I recognized the tone of the stronger tenor soloist in some of the choruses) and the soloists as a group are accomplished and promising if they do not carry the weight of impressive authority. The tenor who sings the title role (I can not be sure from the labeling which this is) and the bass are the best of the lot.

The score is full of fine things, a number of which are familiar enough. Just why *See the conquering hero comes* should be the best known is a good question, for it is surely not the finest. *Sound an alarm, Arm, arm, ye brave and Come ever smiling*

The American Record Guide

liberty well merit the popularity they have enjoyed, and *O liberty, thou choicest treasure* and especially the chorus *Tune your harps* deserve to be better known. That the last named emerges as the gem it is speaks pretty well for the merits of this performance.

—P.L.M.

MUSIC OF POLAND: *Seven Polish folk songs* (arr. Sygietyński); **Mazowsze Choral Ensemble**, with orchestra, conducted by **Tadeusz Sygietyński**; *Suite of ancient Polish airs and dances* (arr. Panufnik); **Radio Warsaw Orchestra**, conducted by **Jerzy Kolaczowski**. Vanguard LP disc VRS 6001, \$5.95.

▲THIS is a pleasant and interesting disc, presenting two possible treatments of folk music. The song arrangements are made in a style to suggest the authentic thing, although obviously art has gone into making them sound natural. The choral harmonizations are extremely simple, leaning toward unisons and drones, but always with an instrumental background contrived to suggest folk music-making. The tone of the chorus, too, is kept in the style of the people, yet not too consciously primitive. The dances form a suite after the manner of Respighi or perhaps Peter Warlock, but with none of the harmonic spice of the latter. Arranged for strings, the folk tunes here alternate with original conceptions of Panufnik, the arranger.

—P.L.M.

HAYDN: *Missa St. Joannis De Deo; Missa Brevis in F*; **Hedda Heusser** and **Anni Berger** (sopranos), **Anton Heiller** (organist), **Hans Gilleberger** (conductor), **Akademie Kammerchor** and **Chamber Orchestra of the Vienna Symphony**. Lyricord LP disc LL-30, \$5.95.

▲CONSIDERABLE historical interest attaches to this recording, as the *Missa Brevis* appears to be the earliest known work by Haydn. As might be expected, it is immature, but charming enough in its own right to warrant occasional performance. The *Missa St. Joannis De Deo*, however, merits attention for its very substantial qualities as one of the finest of

Haydn's Masses. Small in bulk, it is characterized by a deeply emotional quality reminiscent at times of the *Missa St. Caecilia*. The chorus is of major importance, being predominant throughout the work, and this recording fortunately provides us with a fine choral ensemble, with voices of good quality, superbly trained. Both recordings were made earlier in the year in the Mozartsaal of the Vienna Konzerthaus and are acoustically excellent.

—H.V.N.

RAVEL: *Cinq mélodies populaires grecques*; **ANON:** *Deux chansons populaires grecques*; **FAURE:** *Automne*; *Mandoline*; *Soir*; **AUBERT:** *Le vaincu*; *Le visage penché*; **Iram Kolassi** (mezzo-soprano) and **Jacqueline Bonneau** (piano). London 10" LP disc, LS 568, \$4.95.

▲THIS DISC introduces a new singer of real personality and conviction, with a voice suggesting a blend of Madeleine Grey and Ninon Vallin. Her program is a happy one. The first record side, sung all in Greek, contains beside the five little known Ravel arrangements, one harmonization by Saphi — *La jeune fille d'Alalsala* — and one Cretan song arranged by Sfakianakis — *Dourou-dourou*. The Fauré songs on the reverse are reasonably well known, but the two by Aubert come as novelties. Miss Kolassi's appealing voice is well recorded, the piano somewhat less so.

Being Greek, the singer puts herself into the songs on the first side with real power, and being obviously French trained, she does well by Fauré and Aubert. Perhaps her *Automne* may lack the powerful climax attained by Povla Frijish in her recording, and her *Soir* may not have all the wistfulness of Maggie Teyte's, but her *Mandoline* is capital. The post-Duparcian Aubert songs are striking and powerfully presented. Taken from a set of *Six poèmes arabes* on texts by Franz Toussaint, *Le vaincu* is big and restless, with an almost savage climax, while *Le visage penché* is quiet and atmospheric. Surely the value of Norman Suckling's background notes would be enhanced by the inclusion of the song texts. Miss Kolassi, admirable as

she proves herself, is not one of those singers whose diction carries us in spite of ourselves.
—P.L.M.

SCHUMANN: *Dichterliebe, Op. 48;*

WOLF: *Herr, was traegt der Boden hier; Wenn du zu den Blumen gehst; Wer tat deinem Fuesslein weh?; In der Fruehe;* Gerard Souzay (baritone) with Jacqueline Bonneau at the piano. London LP disc LL-535, \$5.95.

SCHUMANN: *Dichterliebe, Op. 48;*

Pierre Bernac (baritone) with Robert Casadesus at the piano. Columbia 10" LP ML-2210, \$4.00.

▲THE recording in both cases is well balanced and the voice and piano are realistic to the ears. It is interesting to compare Souzay and Bernac, as the former was a pupil of the latter. How much more easily Souzay handles a vocal line. The production of teacher and pupil are not the same. The elder man, once a tenor, is an exceptionally gifted artist, musicianly to the core, but his voice is limited in tonal quality. He frequently sacrifices *legato* to stress the meaning of words, and his feeling for sentiment is dangerously near to sentimentality. Souzay is gentler though nonetheless imbued with the poetic sentiment, but his forthright impulse and smooth lyricism reveal artistic taste. Souzay's changing of keys in the song cycle slightly upsets the composer's key relationships, though few will probably be aware of this. Bernac sings the cycle in its original key, while Souzay pitches most of the songs to lower keys.

Of all modern versions of this song cycle, that of the Danish tenor Axel Schiotz is the finest, and his should be placed on LP. Preference of the LP versions lies between Harrell and Ludwig, though neither is completely satisfactory. The former conveys the more sober aspects of the

cycle with deep feeling, while the latter is more successful in the lyrical sections. There is no gainsaying the appeal of Souzay's singing, if one does not object to his sentimental stress. Moreover, he sings four Wolf songs with taste, the third of which *Wer tat deniem Fuesslein weh?*, from the *Spanisches Liederbuch*, is a welcome addition to Wolf's recorded lieder — a lovely song which has been unjustly neglected by singers.

Miss Bonneau is a thoroughly capable accompanist, but Casadesus remains her superior. One remembers the rare partnership of Panzéra and Cortot. If Bernac had a better voice, this Columbia issue would have been similarly artistic.

—P.H.R.

ORCHESTRA

DVORAK: *Symphony in E minor, Op. 95*

(New World); Cleveland Orchestra conducted by George Szell. Columbia LP ML-4541, \$5.45.

▲COLUMBIA'S engineers have done a wonderful job on this recording. The Cleveland Orchestra emerges from the grooves in a lifelike manner with welcome sonorous quality. The percussion will please a lot of listeners.

Szell is in fine fettle. There is both vigor and fervor in his performance; his is one of the most orderly, forthright readings of this much abused symphony, praiseworthy for its musicianly underhanding of balance, proportion and timing. Test slow movement, often sentimentalized, is played with true feeling—the feeling that the composer gave it. Careful observance of Dvorak's directions is followed throughout, as Szell previously did in his earlier recording with the Czech Philharmonic, but the playing is not so sober and stolid. If it does not suggest the affection that Stokowski shows for the music, it conveys as reasonable and comprehending a grasp of Dvorak's intentions as any other LP recording.

—P.H.R.

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Faure's "Requiem"

(Continued from page 369)

in its rhythmic pulse than in the re-issued Columbia recording, which in its time was much admired and preferable to Victor's Montreal Festival version. One wonders why a newly announced and well considered French Columbia recording was passed up by the domestic company for this revival.

The soloists in the Oceanic release are much better than those in the Columbia, especially Nadine Sautereau, whose *Pie Jesu* just misses top-rating by a slightly fast tempo and a breathy final note. The best things in the lovely work are brought out here—the thrilling quality of the *Hosanna* in the *Sanctus*, the serene and wonderful melody introducing the *Agnus Dei*, and the shuddering quality of the choral reprise of the *Libera me* melody. One cannot but marvel that René Leibowitz, a leading disciple and interpreter of Schoenberg and a twelve-tone composer in his own right, can conduct such music as this with so pure and comprehending a hand.

—P.L.M.

Szigeti at his Greatest

(Continued from Page 358)

try in his prime and his playing is poised, beautifully polished and tonally ingratiating throughout. I agree with Kolodin, who says in his book that the Prokofiev performance is "the triumphant demonstration to date of his (Szigeti's) virtuosity, taste, and musicianship." Period recently issued a performance of this concerto by the noted Russian violinist David Oistrach, who revealed comparable artistry, but unfortunately that recording was badly balanced and belabored by surface noise. In the playing of the lovely Mozart concerto, Szigeti has no peer on records. How much more compatible he and Beecham are than Heifetz and Beecham. Here is a unanimity of purpose, not only

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in balance and timing, but in feeling. In their recording transfers, Columbia engineers have achieved an acoustic resonance not heard in the original issues and though they have not succeeded in reducing the heaviness of the bass—a feat which probably could not be accomplished with the range as narrow as it is here—the results remain nonetheless most satisfying.

—P.H.R.

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Mozarts Concertos

(Continued from page 366)

ductor were not seeing eye to eye with the result that piano and orchestra are not always happily coordinated. Nor is the pianist's playing as clearly articulated as in the past. Krips is not the most sympathetic conductor—he is a bit too forthright and unbending. If not as well recorded, the Gaby Casadesus—Bigot performance seems more persuasive to me.

As for Bach's three clavier concerto, this has never been advantageously served by pianos. The Haydn Society issue (disc 1024) with three harpsichords presents this music to best advantage. Somehow, to me, Bach's three and four clavier concertos, have always seemed a contrapuntal exercise more effective in the concert hall than on the record, except in the case of the Haydn Society disc. If it is an argument for the harpsichord in this music, I am on the side of the old instrument. There are plenty of lovely sounds from this record and some fine piano playing but the balance is not always good. Fischer conducting from the first piano may be the guilty culprit, but wherever the fault, Herr Bach has not been ideally served.

—P.H.R.

Recent "Pops" Releases

Luna Rossa; Tennessee Newsboy. Frank Sinatra. Columbia 39787.

▲Frankie delves into the treasure trove of Italian popular song literature for *Luna Rossa* a real sweetheart, and he delivers it as such.

When I Fall In Love; Take Me In Your Arms. Doris Day. Columbia 39786.

▲Two solid numbers, the former a definitely superior Victor Young item of recent vintage, the latter a well-remembered oldie of 20 years ago. Doris gives them the full treatment.

Pretty Boy, Pretty Girl; You Belong To Me. Jo Stafford. Columbia 39811.

▲Rather calypso-like goings-on here, representing the swiftest singing that Stafford has undertaken in some months.

Kay's Lament; Fool, Fool, Fool. Kay Starr. Capitol 2151.

▲"Really the blues" describes these adequately. Starr is a powerhouse in material like this and is happily backed-up by some highly ingenious and effective arrangements.

Come Rain or Come Shine; Love Me. Marlene Dietrich. Columbia 39797.

▲Unless you're a deep-died Dietrich addict, this is bound to be pretty excruciating. What she does in her sub-cellar off-key moaning to Harold Arlen's beautiful *Come Rain or Come Shine* beggars description.

Slaughter on Tenth Avenue. Ray Anthony and Orchestra. Capitol 7-2085.

▲Heavy-handed dance band arrangement of a minor classic which is ill-suited to this type of treatment.

A Sinner Am I; All of Me. Johnnie Ray. Columbia 39788.

Take him or leave him, Ray is the most remarkable phenomenon in the pop singing field since Sinatra. He's as extraordinary as ever here in a slow number of his own and a rhythmic handling of the oldie *All of Me*.

Padam, Padam; Auf Wiederseh'n, Sweetheart. Les Baxter and Orchestra. Capitol 2143.

▲Former is a Viennese-type affair done with lots of style and favored by Capitol's customary lush recording.

Where Did the Night Go?; Blow Out the Candle. Toni Arden and Jan Arden. Columbia 39766.

▲Toni and brother (?) give full-throated treatment to one of the hits from Harold Rome's fine score for *Wish You Were Here*.

Zing a Little Zong!; Body and Soul. Helen O'Connell. Capitol 2137.

▲Former is a hit tune from the forthcoming Crosby film and you'll be hearing a lot of it, but O'Connell's version doesn't quite get off the ground.

Jamaican Rhumba; Da-Du. Percy Faith and Orchestra. Columbia 39790.

▲Faith has fun here with a couple of light classics, but the results are far from edifying. Most will prefer them in their original form.

Honey; I Love Girls. Arthur Godfrey. Columbia 39792.

▲Honey has two choruses of Godfrey strumming an indifferent ukelele as well as one chorus of "voice." Hard to tell which is the more exciting.

Solo Flight. Erroll Garner. Columbia LP disc CL-6209.

▲Garner is possibly the prime example in our day of the heights to which a completely untutored musician of taste and imagination may go. With the exception of Shearing, who excels him in versatility and resourcefulness, he is easily the most stimulating pianist in the business. This collection, in which, according to Mitch Miller, he was allowed to "soar" without the usual interference from the recording director, is a must for the piano collector and the best he has issued to date, from every point of view.

Dinner Music. Sigmund Romberg and Orchestra. Victor LP disc LM9019.

▲This consists mostly of unfamiliar Romberg tunes, with a few old favorites like *Blossom Time* and *Student Prince*, as well as the non-Rombergian *Barcarolle* from *Tales of Hoffmann* and *Merry Widow Waltz*. Any Romberg admirer will want this as it contains considerable material never before recorded, to the best of my knowledge.

—Van Norman

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